

COMIC CUTS 2

ROLICKING FUN AND THRILLING TALES

KING OF COMICS

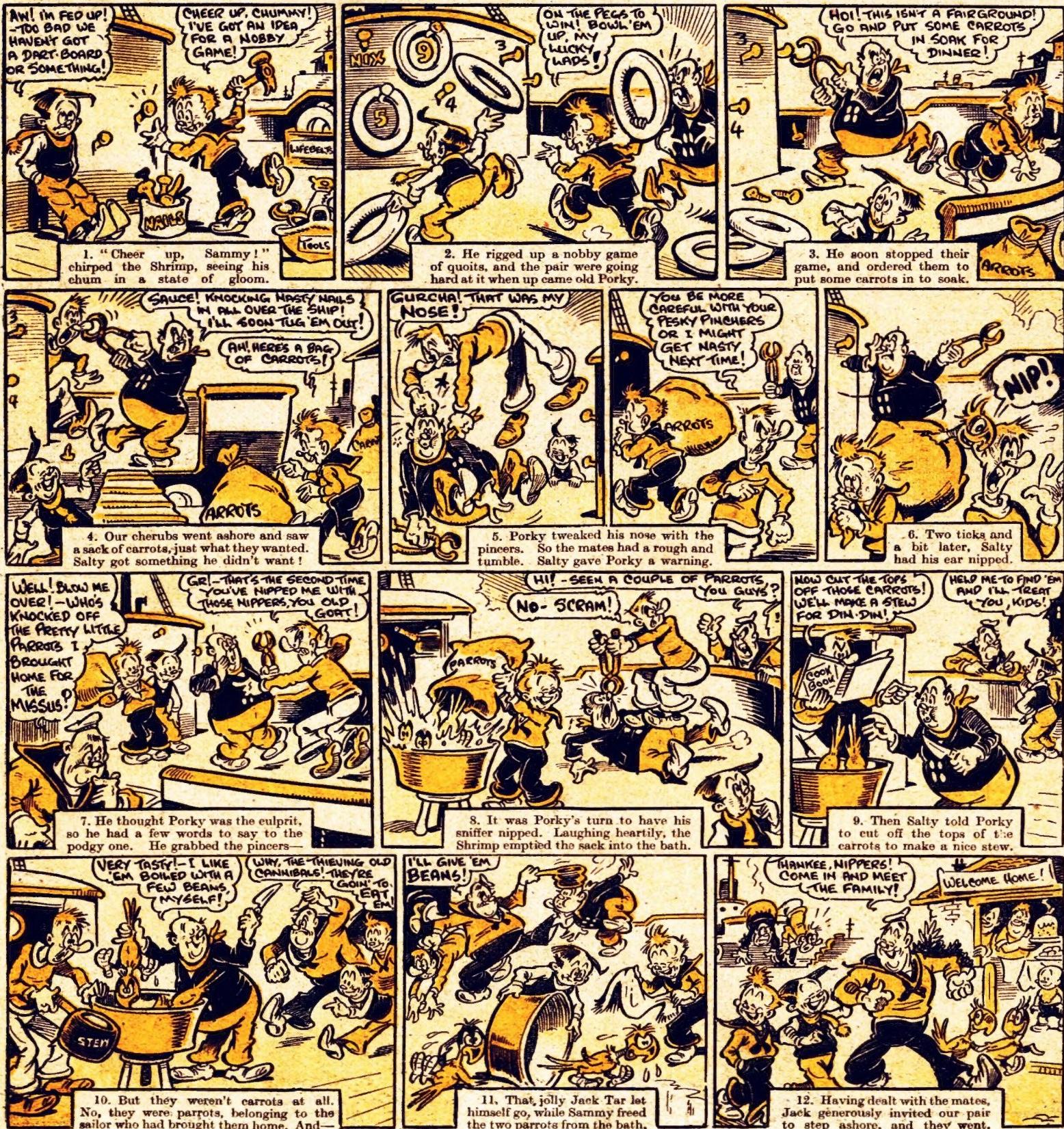
# COMIC CUTS

AND LARKS

[No. 2,755.]

SAMMY AND THE SHRIMP GET THE MATES IN A STEW!

[DECEMBER 2, 1944.]



# ROVER JOE

## Bank Hold-up!

THE straggling main street of Blue Springs was thronged with people—men, women, boys, girls—all into the little Western cow-town, staring about him with puzzle interest.

"Sleepy, old son," Joe drawled, addressing his remarks to a tall, scraggly boy. "I don't know what's gonna happen. Unless the town's turned out to welcome yo' an' me, old timer," he added, with a chuckle.

But the cheery-faced little range roamer was warming the hearts for excitement in Blue Springs. The crowds had gathered to watch the shooting of a thrilling bank hold-up scene, which was to be part of a new Wild West film drama.

As Joe rode slowly nearer to the town, he saw that the street had been cleared except for a large car on which an impressive-looking film camera was perched on a tripod. Two men, wearing fur-collared greatcoats, stood beside the camera, peering intently down the main street.

Suddenly, as the distant clatter of racing hoofbeats sounded, a cry went up:

"Here they come!" And the crowd craned forward eagerly.

Joe reined in and turned to stare down the street. Two massive horsemen galloped into view, and while the film camera recorded their every action they pulled up amid a flurry of dust in front of the little Blue Springs bank.

One of the men leapt to the roadway and, pulling out his gun, was shouting into the bank. In a matter of moments it seemed, he reappeared carrying a metal-bound case. Slinging this up to his hat belt, he leapt into the saddle. The horses were quickly spurred into top speed as they raced off down the main streets.

A moment later the film car went roaring after the actor-bandits, the camera still turning as it filmed their getaway.

At last, as the hoofbeats died to a mere echo, the crowds began to disperse, laughing and chattering for they felt the same had really turned out to be a little bit of fun, even though what they had just witnessed was only make-believe.

"H'm!" Joe grunted, the trace of a smile on his face. "I guess those guys couldn't ha' done it better if they'd been real bandits. They sure looked the part—"

Next moment the little wanderer broke off and his smile faded.

For out of the bank had staggered the elderly manager, holding his hands to

an ugly wound in his head. And there was no play-acting about this new incident.

"Bandits!" the old chap was shouting. "Not film actors at all—quicks! They got me with a silenced gun—they've robbed the bank—"

"Gosh!" gasped Joe. "So it was the real thing, I neveroyed! Sleepy, old timer, guess this is what we do some havin' ridin'—and I don't mean maybe!"

And while the doughtyfaced hero made ready to ride, Sleepy went racing away towards the distant snow-clad hills in pursuit of the bandits.

On the face of things pursuit seemed hopeless for it was most likely that the two men in the car were partners in the crime. If that were so, Jon reasoned, the bandits would abandon their horses and would continue their getaway in the car.

But Sleepy went deeper into the hills the stocky, grim-faced little range roamer became more and more mystified. The trail was easy to follow, for there had been a fairly heavy fall of snow since the bandits had left, and the tracks of the two horses and of the pursuing car were clear and distinct.

Suddenly, Joe saw something lying in the snow beside the trail. He reined in and leapt from his saddle, to discover that it was a round black metal box. Joe instantly recognised it as a film container.

"Reckon it dropped from that film car," he muttered. "I'll take care of it. It might come in handy as evidence."

Staffing the black box inside his saddle pouch, he remounted and the pursuit continued. But not for long.

Slowly he just began to lose in the winding hill trail, on which the snow was becoming deeper, when clear on the crisp air sounded a muffled cry—a cry for help.

It seemed to come from a snow-capped copse of trees, and Joe jumped from the saddle. Alert for any sign of treachery, he hurried towards the spot, one hand on the hilt of his holstered six-shooter.

Then his eyes widened at the sight before him.

Two white-faced, half-frozen men, stripped to shirt and breeches, were overdriving a deep ravine. And very evident signs of relief showed on their drawn faces as the stocky little Westerner strode towards them.

### Cargo of Crooks!

"SAY, what's the idea?" Joe drawled as he approached the shivering men. Then, as he glanced down at the prints in the snow beside the trail, a light of understanding crossed his weather-toughened countenance.

"Gee," he gritted, "reckon yo' guys have kinda figured in two hold-ups this morning!"

## COMIC CUTS.

"Shure we have," answered the older of the two men. And as Joe began to loosen their bonds and help them to regain their frozen limbs, he heard their story.

They were Hiram K. Hallis, the film producer, and his cameraman, who had been in the car, driving the hold-up men, and working with one armful of film. And it was not until they were speeding along on the snow-covered trail that they realised that something had gone wrong with their plans.

And as he learned, Joe came to the decision that these two men were not partners of the hold-up bandits.

"I began to suspect things were not all they should have been when the two men whose traps we were finding did not slow down after leaving Blue Springs," said the man. "Then, when

along the trail that led still deeper into the hills.

As Sleepy neared on, Joe's keen eyes were on the double track of the snow-drifts, showing clearly in the snow. Soon the trail began to rise steadily and the snow deepened. This helped to reduce that old grey's speed, but scrupulously avoiding the deep snow-tracks told Joe that the car had been slowed down almost to a walking-pace.

Suddenly, at a sharp bend in the trail ahead, he saw the car. Its front wheel was stuck in a drift, and in a deep snow-drift, both its occupants were feverishly trying to extricate it.

Joe trotted Sleepy towards the spot and then reined in. The bandits, he noted, were bare-backed and were wearing their fur-collared greatcoats over their Western garbs.

"Howdy, strangers!" he called out. "Gee you've struck a spot of trouble."

"Yo're tellin' me! Look at the bands you're wearin' home. I'm Hiram K. Hallis, the film producer—yo've heard tell of me, I guess—and this is my cameraman."

He indicated the panting, exhausted man who was pushing the car. "We're in a mighty hurry to get to Burgerville, but we're all stuck up. Got any ideas, pard, fr' gettin' us out? You'll be darned and mad an inspection of the car."

"Gee, yo're stuck, an' no mistake," he drawled. "We'll see what my old boss can do about it."

Slowly Sleepy strained across, then he attached a rope to the old grey's saddle-horn and knotted the other end to the rear bumper of the embedded car. Watched by the two men whose eyes never left him, the stocky figure took moment the little wanderer urged Sleepy to pull.

The old grey responded gallantly, but his hoofs slipped in the thin layer of snow that covered the first edition highway. Then, as Sleepy strained backwards, the car began slowly to move, and at last the snow fell away from its bonnet, leaving it standing free on the clearing ground.

"Gee, that's mighty fine o' you, old timer," sang out one of the bandits as he and his partner climbed back into the stolen car. "Guess we're grateful to you."

"Next moment he whipped out a gun. But before he could take aim, Joe's gun seemed to flash into his hand. There came a deafening bark as the six-shooter spoke, and the treacherous bandit gave a yell of pain as he fell, clutching at his gun and clutched at his smashed wrist.

Instantly the second bandit flung the car into gear, and a moment later it had gone roaring away up the trail. But Joe was ready for any such move.

Bounding forward, he leapt into the back of the car.

"Hold your horses, rat!" he bleded at the man who was driving. "Don't let the threat of the gun and the glint in the little man's steely eyes. Guess I'm giving the orders from now on. Hand over your shotgun, front."

Joe reached down from the two scared bandits and flung them into the back of the car. Then he perched himself on the camera platform and his old contented smile wrinkled his weather-beaten face.

"Okay! Now we're headin' back for Blue Springs," he drawled. "An' don't try any tricks or this gun o' mine might go off again."

And to the two bandits knew when they had met their master, and with a tumultuous roar the car moved off, Sleepy loping along behind.

It was not long before they overtook the film crew, Hiram K. Hallis and his cameraman, trudging along the snowy trail. And Joe could not restrain his mirth when he saw the open-mouthed amazement on their faces at sight of the man with his cargo of snow-tracks.

"Gee, yo're two guys shure do look cold," Joe chuckled as the half-frozen film men climbed shudderingly into their car. "Yo'd better believe those rats o' ours are bad when we've gotta keep an appointment with the sheriff o' Blue Springs."

(Another rousing Rover Joe adventure in Friday week's number.)

### OUR COMICAL CARTOONIST GIVES SOME SECRET HISTORY!



## COMIC CUTS.



## An Unexpected Case.

NIGHT was falling as Kenton Steel drove his car into the town of Banchester. He was on his way back to London, after concluding a visit that had occupied him for a couple of days.

"This is as far as I intend driving to-night," asserted the detective. "It's a long run to London, and I don't care to drive the distance especially this weather. I'll find an hotel to put us for the night and finish the journey in the morning."

There were very few hotels in the place. Before long, Kenton saw one, the Monroe, before where he was able to book a room for the night. The hotel had its own garage, and as soon as he had put his car away, Steel made for the dining-room.

After that there was nothing much to do, beyond glancing through one or two papers and enjoying a smoke. It was not long after ten when the detective decided that he had better start, as it was his intention to start off directly after breakfast in the morning.

He slept like a top in a very comfortable bed. Waking next morning, he washed, shaved and dressed and descended to the dining-room for breakfast.

The food, like the accommodation, was quite good. There did not seem to be anything wrong about the hotel, which was a small one.

"Now to get on the road," said Steel at length. "The weather isn't so bad this morning. It's dry, that's one good thing. You ought not to be very long getting back."

But it was not to be. As Kenton Steel was settling his bill at the cashier's desk in the vestibule, a portly man of about fifty years, turning up, his eyes goggling with excitement.

"Where's the manager?" he spluttered at the clerk. "Where is he? I must see him at once."

The manager, Mr. Turner, happened to be passing the time, and he came quickly across.

"Is anything the matter, Mr. Mayhew?" he asked of the excited gentleman.

"Yes, there is," was the reply. "I've been robbed! My room has been entered during the night, and my wallet and gold watch and chain have vanished."

The manager became alert at once. So did Steel.

"Really, Mr. Mayhew," said Turner, a small, keen-faced little man, "I am very distressed to hear this. Are you sure?"

"Yes, positive!" broke in the excited Mr. Mayhew. "There is no doubt about it. The things have gone. Some thief has been at work."

And then before Turner could make reply, the telephone buzzed on to the cashier's counter. The call proved to be for the manager, and he took the receiver.

The spluttering of a female's excited voice could be heard from the other end. Though Steel could not catch what she said, he saw Turner's face grow longer and longer, until there was no mystery.

"I'll come up at once, Mrs. Goodman," said the manager at length.

He replaced the receiver and spoke to the cashier.

"I am going up to Mrs. Goodman's suite in the first floor," he said. "I shall be back in a few minutes. Please excuse me, Mr. Mayhew," he went on, turning to that gentleman.

"But I must have been robbed!" spluttered Mayhew.

The more time lost, the more opportunity there was of getting away.

However, he was addressed to empty air, for Turner was hurrying away and soon disappeared from view. Mayhew turned to Steel and continued to pour out his woes into the detective's ears.

"I think you'd better try to keep

calm till the manager returns," Steel advised him in a friendly tone. "He'll no doubt do all he can, not only for your sake, but for the reputation of our company."

With that Mayhew had to be content. He was very relieved when, after some minutes, the manager was seen returning, looking more worried than ever.

"Get through to the police station for me, please, Harry," he said to the cashier. "Mrs. Goodman has been kidnapped. This is terrible. That's dreadful. The police will have to be called in—and—"

"Excuse me," Steel butted in quietly, "but I wonder if I can be of any assistance, as I am on the spot. I am Kenton Steel."

The manager gasped. He had had no idea that the detective was to the identity of the detective, who had only signed the hotel book with his initials.

As soon as he could get over his surprise, Turner turned to the detective's offer. So Steel suggested their retiring to the office, and Mayhew went with them.

Then Steel learnt details of Mrs. Goodman's loss. Her room had been entered during the night, and a skeleton of jewellery had been stolen. She was insisting on the police being informed at once.

"That's a thing I should like to avoid if I can," said the manager to Steel. "If I only could succeed in dealing



"So that's your game, is it, you spy?" he snarled fiercely.

with the matter and keeping it quiet it would mean a lot to the hotel."

"I quite understand that," said Steel. "Well, let's strike while the iron is hot. Let's have a quick interview at Mr. Mayhew's room, and Mrs. Goodman's, too, if it is convenient."

"By all means," said Mayhew readily. "And if you can get my wallet and gold watch back for me, I shall be extremely grateful to you."

The three went up to the first floor where Mayhew's room was situated. Steel spent some time in it examining the contents of the apartment. But he found nothing in the shape of a clue.

"All right," he said at last. "You can stay here for the time being, Mr. Mayhew, while I go and interview Mrs. Goodman."

And that lady so distressed that it took him some minutes to calm her down sufficiently to talk rationally. Then she confirmed what he had already been told by the manager—that her jewels had been stolen during the night by some mysterious marauder.

And the question was, of course, who had done it, and where was he now? Steel's search of Mrs. Goodman's room did not yield any more clues than Mr. Mayhew had done.

But the very fact that he had drawn a blank so far spurred Steel on to see through this case which had so unexpectedly come his way.

"All right, Mrs. Goodman," he said.

"Don't worry too much. I think there's a good chance of your getting your property back."

With reassuring words, he came out with the manager, and the pair went down to the office again, at Steel's suggestion.

The odds are all in favour of somebody in the hotel being the thief," declared Steel. "Either one of the staff or one of the visitors."

The manager quickly told him that the staff were all accounted for, and could vouch for the honesty of every one. Then he described the remaining visitors, nearly all of whom were elderly people.

You could not possibly suspect any of them, Mr. Steel," he said. "And he's been staying here for a fortnight. Says he likes the place, like the quiet, and intends to stop here indefinitely." He had a two-roomed suite on the first floor and a study.

He was interrupted by a tap on the door, which was thrown open by a man of about thirty-five.

## The Locked Bag.

THE newcomer, well dressed and with neatly parted, greased hair, was a rapid glance at the other two visitors.

"I must apologise for interrupting, Turner," he said.

"Not at all," replied the hotel manager. "What can I do for you, Mr. Markham?"

"Well, I'm afraid I must ask you to make out my bill," said the newcomer. "I know this is a shock to you the same as it is to me. I had fully intended to stay on here for some weeks at least. But I've had a letter this morning which makes it imperative for me to go

home said 'at the finish, and then went along to Mrs. Goodman's apartment."

There he repeated the process exactly, and the door was once more closed to the visitor. His face was entirely took his leave.

Steel was walking slowly along the thickly carpeted corridor, when one of the staff clattered to come along.

"Who is it?" inquired one of Mr. Markham's rooms?" Steel asked.

"No, 27, sir," he was told.

It was at the far end of the corridor, near the door was closed. Listening outside, the door was closed. Listening somebody moving within. See he tapped on the door with his knuckles.

There was an appreciable pause. Then the key was turned in the lock, the door was suddenly opened, and Markham had gone out.

"Yes, what is it?" he asked.

"You're wanted in the manager's office," said Steel grimly. "There's a telegram for you from Glasgow, boy."

"A call from Glasgow for me?" half muttered Markham. "But I don't know anybody in—"

He stopped abruptly and gave a little grunt.

"Oh, all right, I'll go down and see who it is," he went on. "Thanks for letting me know."

He came out, closed the door and went down the stairs. Steel followed, though more slowly. And as soon as Markham had disappeared down the stairs the detective darted back to the manager's room and expected to find Steel still over the sitting-room. He found nothing, however, so he opened the communicating door and passed into the bedroom.

There the first thing that caught his eye was a small bag lying on the bed. On it, he lifted it up and shook it. Something was inside, something that jangled. But the bag was locked.

Steel remembered having seen a small ring of keys on the bed. He darted back there snatched the keys, selected one and fitted it in the lock of the bag. A click and it came open.

There was a moment, as silently as a cat, Markham glided into the room.

"So that's your game, is it, you spy?" he snarled fiercely. "Leave that bag alone."

Steel was not to be thwarted now. Boldly he threw the bag open wide, and his eyes gleamed at what he saw. A bunch of skeleton keys, two small jemmies, a torch and two pairs of pliers, a pocket knife, a hammer, a crackman and nothing else.

A bellowing snort burst from Markham, and he flung himself furiously upon Steel. But miraculously the steeling detective was no longer there, by the second. Markham shot forward, tripped over the bag and struck the floor.

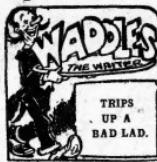
But he put up a terrific fight, and Steel had his work cut out to hold him, while the others, who had been watching from the door, came running to his aid. Then Markham was finally overpowered.

And while the police phoned to come and take him away, Steel explained what had happened.

"Markham is an expert crackman," he said. "I lay his plans well. He came to this hotel as a bona fide visitor, made himself affable to the other residents, and got to know what he wanted from their movements and habits. Having made his hand last night, he concocted that story that he had to go to Glasgow at once to account for his leaving. But I had blurted out the truth a few minutes ago that he didn't know anybody in Glasgow."

"Anyway, while he was down below to answer the imaginary phone call, I made a hundred and one calls, and tried to confirm the story. And I was already suspicious of Markham. Thanks to that stuff he greased his hair with. There are traces of it, both the grease and the sweat, on the door handle of Mrs. Goodman's room and Mr. Mayhew's. That's where Markham, in the dark last night, first listened outside, then stood quite still inside the closed door, while making certain that the rooms were asleep and the coast clear."

"Don't miss Friday week's splendid Kenton Steel story." 2-12-44



The navvy looked like losing his lunch when Waddles got held up and robbed. But our waiter tripped the bad lad up and everything turned out smashing!

**PLUM AND DUFF, THE BOYS OF THE BOLD BRIGADE!**



1. Our bold boys were wading into some choice chewing gum when Suet oozed up and wanted to know where they'd got it. Well, they told him.



4. But it was the stuff that sticks, not the kind you chew, and Suet felt about as rotten as he looked as a result. Then Bogey boodled along!



7. To make matters worse, a passing spy tried to collect the lot. "Do something!" shrieked Bogey. So Plum did it. He gave the gun a kick—



1. Our commandant gave me a dose of cookhouse duty t'other day, and ordered me to heat up the soup. But while I was tasting it Lena looked in.

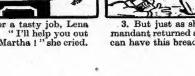
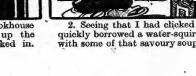
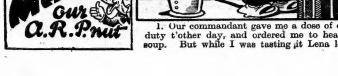
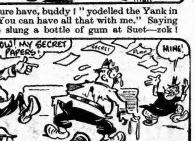
2. Seeing that I had clicked for a tasty job, Lena quickly borrowed a water-squirt. "I'll help you out with some of that savoury soup, Martha!" she cried.

3. But just as she was filling the squiremandant returned and she had to hop it.  
can have this bread to go with it, Lena?



The navy looked like losing his lunch when Waddles got held up and robbed. But our water tripped the bad lad up and everything turned out smashing!

## PLUM AND DUFF, THE BOYS OF THE BOLD BRIGADE!



## COMIC CUTS KING OF COMICS.

### CUT AND CRUNCH



Kitty thought she had put a damper on Freda when she kicked over the bowl of water. However, when Freda tried her barrow-tono voice a hawker shut her up.

## BIG BEN AND LITTLE LEN, THE LARKY LADS!

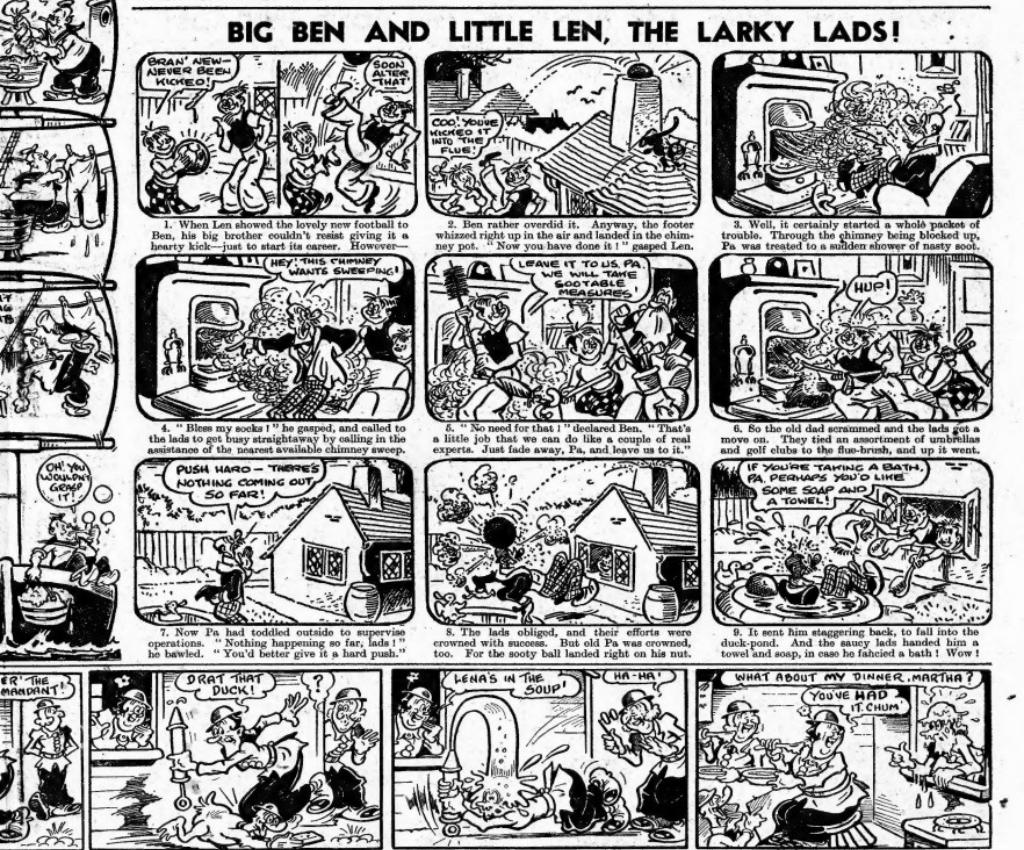


*Ana*  
*THINKS*



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## BIG BEN AND LITTLE LEN, THE LARKY LADS!



1. When Len showed the lousy new football to Ben, his big brother couldn't resist giving it a hearty kick just to start its career. However—

HEY! THIS CHIMNEY WANTS SWEEPING!

"Bless my socks!" he gasped, and called to the lads to get busy straightforward by calling in the assistance of the nearest available chimney sweep.

PUSH HARD — THERE'S NOTHING COMING OUT SO FAR!

7. Now Pa had toddled outside to supervise operations. Nothing happening so far, lads he bawled. "You'd better give it a hard push."

DRASTIC THAT DUCK!



4. Unluckily for her, my pet duckums waddled up just then and promptly pounced on it. "She's not going to get away with this. No!" quacked Marcus.

2. Ben rather overdid it. Anyways, the footer whizzed right up in the air and landed in the chimney pot. "Now you have done it!" gasped Len.

LEAVE IT TO US, PA. WE WILL TAKE SCOTABLE MEASURES.

5. "Need for that!" declared Ben. "That's a little job that we can do like a couple of real experts. Just fade away, Pa, and leave us to it."



8. The lads obliged, and their efforts were crowned with success. But old Pa was crowned, too. For the sooty ball landed right on his nut.

LENA'S IN THE SOUP!



5. Of course, he quite upset old Lena. So much so, in fact, that she did a sudden nose-dive to earth and squirted the soup down her neck in record time.

3. Well, it certainly started a whole packet of trouble. Through the chimney being blocked up, Pa was treated to a sudden shower of nasty soot.

HUP!



6. So the old dad scammed and the lads got a move on. They tied an assortment of umbrellas and golf clubs to the fly-brush, and up it went.



IF YOU'RE TAKING A BATH, PA, PERHAPS YOU'D LIKE SOME SOAP AND A TOWEL!



6. "Ha, ha! What a come-down for old Lena!" our commanding officer laughed. "Now perhaps we'll have our dinner in peace." — MARTHA.

Another thrilling adventure of the Jumbo tank chums.

# MENACE OF THE MINE!

Left in Command.

**W**ELOOME 'to Stahlmuster, mein dear goot friend! How glad we German peoples are dot der Nazis and Gestapo men have gone!"

The speaker was Herr Rudolf Ulrich, manager of the coal-mine around which the battered houses of the little Ruh town were clustered. But Sergeant Tom Arnold ignored the fat, fakle-headed old man, who, after what he had seen of Him methods, he was in no mood for hobnobbing with any German.

"That's what all you Jerries say," he snorted curtly. "You civvies are our own peopple ratting now we've kicked your unbeatable troops out of it."

"Hummel! I am mooth hurt," sighed Ulbach. "Always I was of der true demokraten, and goot friends of der brave Engländer. But it was not wise to tell der pig-dogs of Nazi troopen such things."

Corporal "Tich" Worley, from Lancashire, was standing alongside Private "Rusty" Burton, the West Indian.

"Eee, 't troops would ha' fried you in your last fightin' before you runnin'." "But I wouldn't trust any bloomin' Jerry farther than I could throw a Churchill tank wi' one hand." "Dat does no to my old, old bones, nodding. But, Herr! How come you're not butchers like de Huns, and yo' won't come to no harm so long as you don't make mischief. And dat goes! We'll die folks in di dirty old one-hoss town."

The three pals found themselves with a job not entirely to their liking. The tank which Tom commanded had been knocked out near Stahlmuster, and Major Randall the senior officer of the squadrons had ordered them to stay and cew to remain in the occupation of the coal-mining town whilst the armour swept farther into Germany. His further orders were for Tom to march his party to British troops ready to meet the following the armoured attack.

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They made a short tour of their small, grimy kingdom. A few German women and children peered out of doors ways and windows, but pretended not to know them. Their language was their own language. Their main impression in the town was of white flags and black looks.

Presently two or three Belgian women came out of a grim, back-to-back building and greeted them warmly. One, an attractive blonde, explained that they had been brought forcibly from Ostend to make and repair camouflage nets. Tom questioned her about the Belgian girls.

"None saw our men go, m'sieu's," she said. "I have fear zat all are killed."

"More likely the Boches took them off to work at some other place," suggested Tom to soothe her. "But soon many British soldiers will be in Stahlmuster and beyond, and your menfolk will be found and rescued. Now, for the time being, you girls must rest here until our troops come and arrangements can be made for sending you to safety."

Tom and his crew stood in an open space bordered on one side by the coal-mining offices, on another by the pit shaft, and further enclosed by huge slag heaps in pyramid form.

"Ach, we'll get our friends becomin'," said Ulbach.

The Belgian woman took a snuff-box from his pocket, helped himself to a pinch and offered it to the "occupation army" of three.

"Thanks, owl lad," said Tich, "but I never smoke. It makes me sneeze."

Tom and Rusty declined, and the sergeant remarked:

BUST IT!



"That's your great-grandfather! / What? No legs?"

Ulrich was stooping over a hole from which a German officer was peering.

"You are sure there are no German troopen still lurking in Stahlmuster?"

"Nein—no troopen are here," answered Ulrich; "dot iss, unless one soldier, who is two renegades der Engländer men, der never-say-die."

"A die-hard, eh?" said Tich. "What we call a blinkin' fanatic!"

"Anyways, you're the big boss in these parts," added Tom; "so you can warn your people that anyone who starts gun-play under cover of the white flag will qualify for six feet of good German sand."

Ulrich pulled a wry face. But the German's expression changed to an unpleasant leers when the three comrades walked away, and his pig-eyes glowered balefully at them.

"We'll make further inquiries," said Tom. "The major said there were slave-workers from Belgium here, one of 'em a stout-hearted chap named Maezen. He thought there was useful information to be gained by secret means. It's queer none of 'em have shown up."

They made a short tour of their small, grimy kingdom. A few German women and children peered out of doors ways and windows, but pretended not to know them. Their language was their own language. Their main impression in the town was of white flags and black looks.

Presently two or three Belgian women came out of a grim, back-to-back building and greeted them warmly. One, an attractive blonde, explained that they had been brought forcibly from Ostend to make and repair camouflage nets. Tom questioned her about the Belgian girls.

"None saw our men go, m'sieu's," she said. "I have fear zat all are killed."

"More likely the Boches took them off to work at some other place," suggested Tom to soothe her. "But soon many British soldiers will be in Stahlmuster and beyond, and your menfolk will be found and rescued. Now, for the time being, you girls must rest here until our troops come and arrangements can be made for sending you to safety."

He left the Belgian women in better spirit and returned the patois with Tich and Rusty. They all took a walk around the town and back towards the coal-mine. Then suddenly, unexpectedly, a volley of shots rang out and they flung themselves to the cover of a broken wall as the Boches took to the brick-work of a deserted cottage behind them.

"Eee, a sniper!" panted Tich.

Tom peered through a crevice in the wall and saw a single movement among some trees. His revolver spurted fire, and there was a sharp report. "I judge that either he had 'got' the sniper or else the fellow had scurried away."

The pals, in different directions, converged on the place where the treacherous attack had been made. No one was to be seen, but they found several weapons that had belonged to German casualties. Then, less than a

yard from a Tommy-gun whose barrel was warm, Tom made a discovery that brought a silent glow to his eyes. It was a wooden leg and foot!

"Ulbach!" he muttered. "Looks like that fat tide did the shooting, and maybe pulled the box out of his pocket with his handkerchief without noticing. Let us follow him, get him, and keep on the place and look for that mine manager—and keep your eyes skinned lest he's gone to cover and picked up another loaded gun. Most likely, he'll have had to fall to his office, so I'll go there in case."

On his cautious way back he reached one of the black slag-heaps and was coming round it when he heard a guttural voice. Tom went forward another step and peered round the bulk of Ulrich with his revolver ready.

There was Rudolf Ulrich with his back toward him, stooping over a hole in the ground from which a young, scared-faced German officer was emerging. Tom fired the first shot, but hit another as Ulrich said: "Ach, the Engländer schweinhunde will be searching back there—it was bad fortune that I was here—but I'm not a bad marksmen." Now, Herr Kapitan, I will make the signal for practice to make sure you can hear, and never again will I make it till the right time comes for action."

"A die-hard, eh?" said Tich. "What we call a blinkin' fanatic!"

"Anyways, you're the big boss in these parts," added Tom; "so you can warn your people that anyone who starts gun-play under cover of the white flag will qualify for six feet of good German sand."

Ulrich pulled a wry face. But the German's expression changed to an unpleasant leers when the three comrades walked away, and his pig-eyes glowered balefully at them.

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Nazi captain was there with a torch, and, peering in cautiously, the two scouts saw the contents of the sacks being hauled along the grimy floor in a row, and one German connecting a copper wire.

Tich gripped the arm of Rusty, whose eyes were big and round with mingled wonder and alarm. Tom bent close back noiselessly, but paused on hearing movements from some gallery deeper in the mine. Then they heard the German returning, but dared not investigate further, but recovered the sacks and hastened to Tom, keeping vigil near the mine office.

"Hallo, you sleep!" greeted Tom sleepily. "You're back in good time. While we occupied one of our chaps are coming toward the town."

"Fine!" panted Tich. "But don't collect 'em in this open space between t' slag-heaps." Major Randall suggested in front of t' Jerry who's in charge o' this coal-mine."

"No? What's up?"

"Nottin'—nottin' at all, Tom," answered Tich; "it's down there below. He's—stucks it o'."

"And hundredz of dirty Huns," replied Rusty. "Dat is, at least a score ob dem."

A grim look came into Tom's face, and he beckoned the pair to follow him into the office.

"So here you are—still at work, Herr Ulrich," he exclaimed, as the fat German manager looked up from his desk. "I'm that sniff o' yours good for a cold."

Herr Ulrich smiled.

"Ja, ja!" he answered. "You would der leeds sniff like now, hein?"

He felt in his pocket, and a puzzled look came into his close-set eyes, but he said calmly: "Ach, do it too bad. I want come to my friend and must leave der smiff behind."

"Well, go and get it," snapped Tom, "and get it quick!"

Ulrich fairly bounded out of the office and waddled across the open space on his way to the houses. Under his breath he said: "I'll be back." He did, when he looked back over his shoulder there was a hysterical smirk on his pasty face. Immediately it faded, his cheeks became ashen pale, and he stopped as if paralysed. For, through the open window, he saw Sergeant Tom Arnold bending over the desk with a forefinger on the black electric bell-push.

A harsh cry left Ulrich's trembling lips. He bolted across the room to the door between the shop-shed and the house. It was his a sudden earthquake; great fissures opened and closed, and the lifeless, battered body of Rudolf Ulrich was engulfed in the fearful cataclysm that might well have destroyed a battery of British troops.

The German civilians had paid the penalty for his treachery. Tom and his comrades hurried to demand the surrender of the Nazis emerging from the safe exit of the mine after the dynamics exploded. The Hunz promptly surrendered, a few seconds later. The tunnel the gallery soon raised howls of "Kamerad!" and the survivors were captured just before the British companies arrived.

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The scene of those Belgians made Tom and Rusty more than stay at Stahlmuster. There'll be a thrilling R.A.F. story on this page in next Friday week's number. Don't miss it.

## CAUGHT BENDING!

## Raising the Wind!

THERE was a very dismal expression on the face of Gussie Gumpin as he stood staring out of the window of his bed-sitting room. It was the weather that depressed him; for the day was bright enough for the time of the year. What was worrying Gussie so much was the fact that he was exceedingly short of money at the moment.

He had himself to thank for that fact, for he was of an extravagant nature. But he did not like being hard up, and he was racking his brains as to how he could raise a few pounds to tide him over.

"I could sell something, if I'd anything to sell," he muttered. "But I haven't, so that washes that out. I've tapped all my friends for loans, and there's not a cent more in them coughing up any more. If only some wealthy person would adopt me!"

He gave a sigh as he visualized that picture. Then he scowled as he realized that there was no chance whatever of it happening.

"Of course, there's my Uncle Gregory," he suddenly remarked. "He's got plenty of money. In fact, nobody's richer than he is. He's got... I don't believe the old buffer knows himself to a thousand or two. But he sticks to it like glue. He could send me a fiver and never miss it. But if I asked him for it, he'd tell me off well and truly."

Gussie sighed again and turned away from the window. He pulled out of his pocket all the money he possessed, and his face fell still further.

"A few more fourpence!" he groaned. "A fat lot that is! It's enough to make a chap downright ill, being hard up like this. I wonder I don't have a backache."

And next moment Gussie's eyes opened wide as an inspiration came to him. He turned it over in his mind rapidly, and then gave a little yell: "It's an idea!" he toothed. "It might come in useful if I work it properly. It's worth trying, anyway. I'll write to my Uncle Gregory, telling him that I'm very ill in bed and under the doctor's care, and say that he can call every other day, and when I'm going to pay the money from time to pay his bill is aggravating my complaint and making me worse. With a bit of luck, I might even get away with it."

Without losing time, Gussie got out writing materials and wrote a letter to his uncle. He tore up half a dozen efforts before he at last got it to his liking.

This is how it went:

"My dear Uncle—I hope this letter finds you enjoying good health, as you always do. I am sorry to say that, far from being in the pink myself, I have been confined to bed. The doctor, who calls every other day, says it will be another two or three weeks before I shall be fit again. Please excuse my mind that. But that is worrying me is the fact that I have no idea where I can get the money to pay his bill, which is sure to be pretty stiff one."

"Still, I am doing my best to overcome my troubles, as I expect you have plenty of your own."

"With best wishes,

"Yours affectionate nephew,  
Gussie."

"There, that ought to do it," gurgled the artful young man, having read through the letter several times. "I don't think his bill is any more than £1. I just left it to him. Well, off it goes, and we'll see what happens and hope for the best."

The letter was posted, and Gussie waited hopefully for the reply. Five days passed, and his hopes began to dwindle. It seemed as though his uncle did not intend even to answer his letter.



"Keep your nut down!" he chorused as he went sailing over.

But next morning, just before midday, the postman pushed a letter through the front door, addressed to Gussie. One glance at the handwriting showed him that it was from his Uncle Gregory. "Tipped it!" toothed Gussie delightedly, his eyes sparkling. "Now see what the old buffer says!"

He tore open the envelope and quickly read the letter inside. It ran as follows:

"My dear Nephew—Thank you for your letter which I have only just had time to read. I am sorry for a few moments, and I would like to hear that you are so ill, and I might consider your doctor to be a good one. But he sticks to it like glue. He could send me a fiver and never miss it. But if I asked him for it, he'd tell me off well and truly."

"Hoping you will soon be better again, I remain,  
Yours sincerely,  
GREGORY GUMPE."

And when he read that Gussie was a war-dancer and let loose whoops of joy that scared the cat into scuttling out of the house and brought two pictures down off the wall.

"Uncle Gregory did not worry about that," he said, smiling. "I am quite satisfied with the response to his letter and the prospect of receiving the usual sum of five pounds next day."

"I'm going to splash that five quid!" he toothed. "I'll throw a little party to welcome the new year, and have a big meal at the Royal Cafe to-morrow night. I may as well go along to pay his bill. I would send it to-night, but it is too late, as the post office is shut."

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"The boy is a scamp," thought Gussie. "He has come along to the Royal Cafe, interviewed the manager, and booked a table for four. He also arranged for the menu, and it certainly promised to be quite a nice spread for wartime."

"Well, that's all I need," grunted Gussie, as he伸伸 his hand back home again. "Everything's arranged, and that is required now is the five quid. That'll roll up to-morrow—and there won't be much left by the time I've finished with it, I'm sure."

"I know it," said Uncle Gregory. "If he only knew! Ha, ha, ha!"

He was still feeling very bucked, and a little later he seemed to be an old gentleman bending down to tie up his shoelace. Gussie could not resist the temptation to fly over his back.

"Keep your nut down, you old son-of-a-bitch," he chorused, as he went sailing over.

The astounded old gent nearly fell over. By the time he stood upright, Gussie was toddling off, grinning like a Cheshire cat.

"All right, keep your wool on. Whiskers!" chirped Gussie. "You'd have done the same if you felt in the pink like I do."

With a wave of his stick, he toddled off, leaving the old chap glaring after him, his chin-fringe wagging up and down as he tried to find words suitable to the occasion.

The old man sat alone longer and went into the sitting-room. He was standing by the window, looking out into the street, when the smile suddenly faded from his face and his eyes opened wide. "Mum-my hat!" he gulped. "Look who's coming along the street! It's Uncle Gregory! What on earth's brought him here? And I'm supposed to be very ill in bed according to that letter I wrote him! Wow! I must get a move on!"

He hurried into the kitchen where he hurriedly put his landlady wife as to the situation.

"I'm supposed to be ill in bed," he gulped breathlessly. "I'm going to get me a hat, then make myself look like him, show him up, and if he asks how I am, tell him I'm a little better but I've had a bad fortnight."

Gussie took off his clothes, donned his pyjamas, and scrambled into bed.

A few seconds after Gussie had got between the sheets, there was a tap on his door, and his landlady ushered his uncle into the room. He was a clean-shaven man, and he was carrying a small silver bag.

He stared hard at the supposed invalid, and Gussie put on a smile of genuine friendliness.

"Hello, uncle," he said, in rather a weak voice. "I—I didn't expect to see you to-day. This—is a surprise!"

"Yes, expect it is," replied Uncle Gregory, taking off his hat on the small stool beside the bed. "I fancy you've been in bed for a fortnight."

"And it'll be another fortnight at least before the doctor lets me get up," said Gussie. "We've had a very bad time of it. But it's done me good to have the pleasure of seeing you, uncle. Why—why did you come all this long distance?"

"Well, there's one thing," said Uncle Gregory. "I decided that instead of sending you the five pounds as I mentioned in my letter, I might as well bring it and have the opportunity of seeing you myself."

"The world's a good place, I suppose," said Gussie. "And, as I say, it is a very big surprise."

"Yes, and now I've got a surprise for you," Uncle Gregory went on. "I wonder if you can tell me who this is?"

With a flourish, he unbuttoned his coat, took out a pair of spectacles and a false beard, and fitted them to his face. Then he stared hard at Gussie, who tried to scream aloud, but his tongue went on stammering.

For standing before him now was the old buffer he had caught stooping and whom he had used for overbacks!

"I think you recognise me," Uncle Gregory said, smiling. "I'm sure you did when you visited over me in the street. And I knew then from the evidence of my own eyes that what you had written in your letter about being ill in bed was all moonshine and fiddlesticks."

Gussie felt that the room was swimming round him. He also felt that the five pounds he had counted on was not such a bad sum after all.

He was right. His uncle, sure of his ground, did not spare him.

"All a made up, cock-and-bull story to try to gain my sympathy and get money out of me," he said. "I guess as much! That's why I got this disguise. It was my intention to come to the house and find out whether you really were ill without betraying who I really was."

"Well, I'll tell you good-bye," said Uncle Gregory took his departure, leaving Gussie coiled up like a shark's cable. When at last he could get up, he went to his young companion and sadly went out to cancel his invitations to his friends and wash out all arrangements for the spread.

(Another merry yarn in our next number, on sale Friday week.)

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A RABBIT  
A BIRD  
A POWDER PUFF



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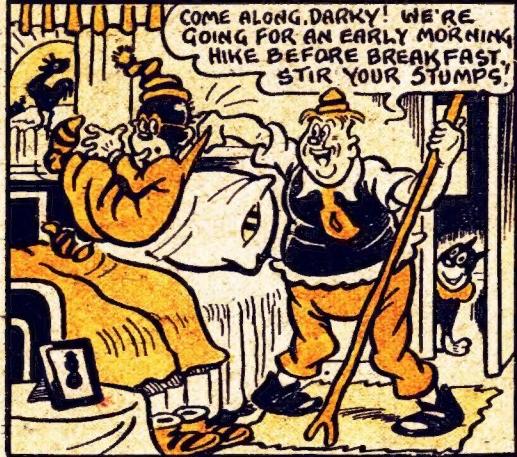
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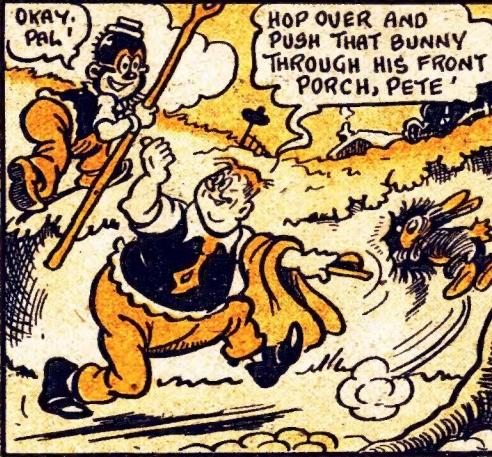
**OVALTINE**  
for Health, Strength & Energy

**PINHEAD and PETE**

PETE HAS A GOOD DE-FENCE !



1. Pinhead got up with the lark t'other morning, and just for a lark he caught his little pal napping and yanked him out of bed. "It's the early bird that catches the worm, so we'll go for a hike!" said he.



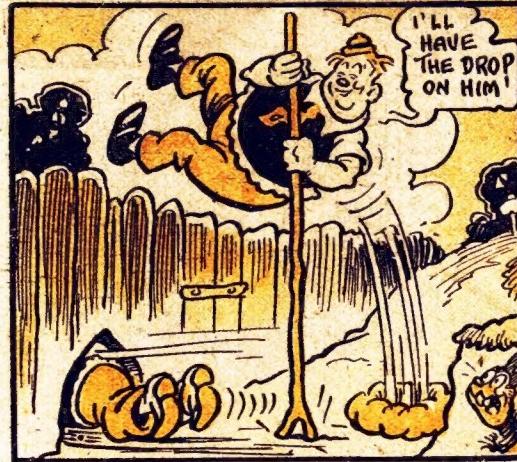
2. Of course, Pete said he did not want to catch worms, he only wanted to be left to sleep in peace. But he had to go all the same, and on seeing some bunny rabbits he suggested bagging a few for lunch.



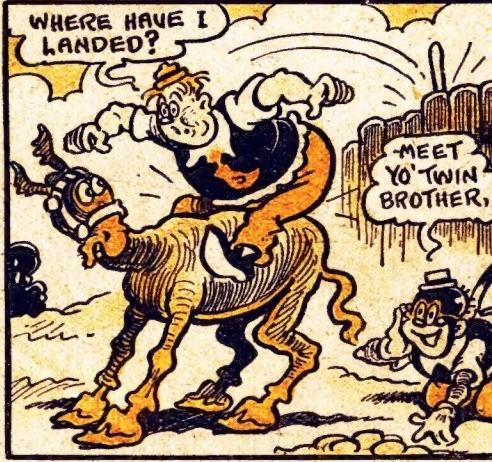
4. Dreaming of rabbit pie he was while he waited for something to turn up, when all of a sudden something did. But instead of a bunny it was his nose!



5. "Wow! I'll spificate that lazy coon!" howled Pinhead. "I'll teach him to poke me on the sniffer!" But trust the coon to come out on top.



7. Two ticks later and Pete had slithered through into the next field. "I'll do a pole-jump over the top!" panted the big boy. "He can't escape me!"



8. But instead of dropping on the little coon as he planned, Pinhead landed on the back of a donkey. "Ha, ha! You fell for dat properly!" laughed Pete.



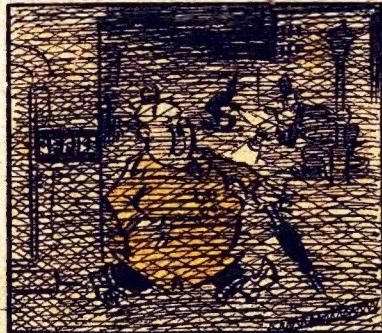
3. "Good idea!" cried Pinhead. "You pop round to the back door of Bunnyville, pal, and push them through the front porch with my stick!" And the big boy placed his bag ready to catch them.



6. Yes, he kept well out of harm's way until the big boy suddenly spotted him and gave chase. Then he noticed a gap in the fence. "Good!" he gurgled.



9. Before Pinhead had a chance to tell Pete where he got off, the donkey started to get his back up and the big boy knew he had not backed a winner this trip.



DIZZY

